

10.12.06 - Media Alert

Traditional West Virginia Music Concert and Report To Congressman Rahall Presented at Tamarack

TAMARACK, BECKLEY- Congressman Nick Rahall was presented today with a report on the musical resources of southern West Virginia as part of his efforts to determine the potential for the establishment of a music center in southern West Virginia.

The project was coordinated by the West Virginia Humanities Council. The report followed ten months of research within the Third Congressional District. The research included interviews with Third District musicians of various styles of music including traditional, gospel, bluegrass, contemporary Christian, blues, and country. It also included fieldwork on the music infrastructure and musicians of note from the region along with preliminary findings and recommendations for future planning related to creation of a music heritage center. Rahall secured \$97,000 for the project through a development grant in 2005.

Remarks of Congressman Rahall follow (as prepared for delivery).

Remarks of U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall

Music Heritage Center Report Presentation

Tamarack, Beckley, West Virginia

Friday, October 13, 2006

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Danny Arthur, Dave Bing, and David O'Dell for the wonderful music.

Thanks also to Ken Sullivan, Executive director of the WV Humanities Council, and Mark Payne, the Council's program officer for your work on the Mountain Music Heritage Project. And, of course, thank you Matt Meacham for your hard work in putting this report together.

You know, Matt attended more than 40 musical events throughout the Third District and interviewed more than 40 people involved in the musical life of the region for this project. His findings will be key in helping us determine how to best to preserve and share our unique musical heritage with the masses.

That's what this project is about-it's about the preservation of a proud tradition-a tradition that most of us here in southern West Virginia have enjoyed for many years, whether it be on our front porches on a warm summer evening...

Or by the fire with the family gathered round on Christmas morning...

Or from the mouths of our mothers, who sang us to sleep with soothing lullabies...

Or in the fields, as we kept cadence by humming the songs our daddies hummed in the same fields years before...

And in our churches, making a joyous sound.

For so many people, mountain music was more than just about notes and rhymes...they were a method of survival. It is important, today and every day, for us to honor the courage behind the music-courage that continues to inspire us today.

Through the work we are doing on the West Virginia Mountain Music Heritage Project, it is my hope that Appalachian music will take its rightful place alongside the rest of our Nation's rich musical heritage and that ears will be opened to the resonant, relevant messages tucked between the bars of these beautiful melodies.

Mountain music is enjoying a renaissance across the country and the time is ripe to make the most out of southern West Virginia's musical riches.

Through education, research and new venues, we want to welcome the world to our front porch hospitality. By learning and listening to some of America's most compelling and heartfelt musical, full of faith and family and love for our West Virginia hills, people can share one of our country's most original arts.

Let me tell you, the findings of your project, which I look forward to reading in full, are "music to my ears." And I agree wholeheartedly with your recommendation to move forward.

Not only will this heritage center serve as a site for music lovers to learn more about the musical history of our region, it will also become another attraction, just like Tamarack, focusing on Appalachian heritage.

More tourists are coming to West Virginia to ski, raft, and explore the outdoors. These same tourists are finding interest in West Virginia's Cultural history and the Music Heritage Project will be a great addition.

I commend you again, all of you, for your support of this project and am proud to join you as we move confidently in our efforts to bring the musical history of our area to the public.

Thank you.